But Victory's Contagious

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But Victory's Contagious

by nobetterlove

Summary

There was a moment of room encompassing silence, Will and Franklyn eyeing each other until the shorter man could no longer keep up. Franklyn lifted his hand to his throat, a couple of fingers slipping under his tie to loosen it. Unease was palpable in the air – Will looked at him unblinkingly, the stare unbroken and menacing in its intensity. There was a message being sent, one that, after a battle of wills, finally seemed to be driven home.

With a couple of stuttered attempts at saying something else, Franklyn blinked the try away and stumbled from the room. He didn't look back over his shoulder and when the door shut with a click, the warm feeling of victory shrouded the room. Hannibal, both pleased and excited by the interaction, turned Will to him, his hands moving until they were chest to chest, their lips meeting easily. "I love you," Hannibal whispered happily, shutting his eyes against the affection.

"I can't kill him, though, can I?" Will asked without waiting a beat, grinning from ear to ear. The best part of the question, probably for the both of them, was the true want of it. If given the opportunity, Will would strike the shorter man down, proclaiming his dominance in the basest of ways.

Notes

Hi friends!

Here's the second to last part of Beautiful Monsters - we're back with Hannibal's POV. I enjoyed writing this one a lot; it's fun to play up his protective side.

You should 100% read the first three parts of this series before you start this one - each one contributes to the overall plot and would make this one make a lot more sense!

Glory and Gore by Lorde kept me inspired during this one. Definitely give it a listen while you read if you're so inclined :D

See the end of the work for more notes

Tying the last of the twine around Walter Bowerman's hands, Hannibal put the final touch on their tableau. He took a large step back, maroon eyes scanning from one side of their work to the other. Bowerman was on his knees, his hands out in front of him, twined together to create a nest where his eyes and heart sat. Feeling extra frisky, Hannibal took them from the very root, corneas attached and all.

The idea of anyone getting to look at Will the way Bowerman did – it gutted him to the very core. A severe amount of pleasure came from yanking each eye from his head. If his mind were a little clearer during their time on the surgery table, he might have done it while the man was still alive – alive enough, at least, to writhe with the pain of their removal. Knowing Will's appeal and his looks that seemed to get better by the day, he might get the opportunity to take out his aggression in that manner, eventually.

Especially now – after his admittedly oddly timed proposal. Hannibal closed his eyes, savoring the way Will's "yes" echoed in the entirety of his mind palace; each room and hall now hosting the memory of rich blue eyes and a shy smile formed around the word. He still felt the tension in his muscles, the heavy lactate build-up of a prolonged clench of contraction in his nervousness. The intention to propose existed for a long time now, but actually getting the question out into the open – well, Hannibal definitely didn't anticipate the blurt.

In a way, though, his proposal fit the tide of their relationship. Almost every big moment in their time together consisted of a true moment of feeling that swept them away and made real intentions known, despite fear and apprehension. Hannibal religiously planned his life from one moment to the next – it protected him, the drapery of normalcy keeping the animal within safe. With Will, and the partnership they existed in, Hannibal lived each second to the next on the edge of his seat. In that aspect of his life, Will contributed a spontaneity that Hannibal wasn't aware he might ever enjoy. And enjoy he did.

Most of the moments in his life were so staged and yet, the biggest one came out of nowhere, post coital bliss and exhaustion fueling the words and his baser desire to own and claim winning out over rationality. Will, because of his own intricacies and coping mechanisms, was the perfect person for him. In all the ways they were different, they connected through a series of similarities that tied them together like one soul split square down the middle – after many years, finally coming back together.

When Will dropped to a dead silence directly after his demand, Hannibal wanted to yank the words back, pulling them from the air like they never existed. In his understanding of him, Will grabbed his cheeks and force their eyes to meet – the eye-contact unblinking. His face was split open wide with a smile that was only Hannibal's and the sweetest word fell from beautiful, kiss swollen lips. The very thought of apprehension silly after their mouths met and a certain sort of union happened in the touch. Lips sealing the deal.

That was many hours ago now – Hannibal's recollection of it still playing vividly behind his eyes and in his memories. Despite all of the things they got up to during the day (including dismembering and staging a dead body), that singular moment kept him weighted down. Maybe it was the implicit nature of finally finding forever; or maybe, the unabashed happiness that Will found with him was personified in that one look. He never wanted to

forget it – Hannibal would gladly live on the sensory extravaganza of that monumental second in time where everything came together perfectly.

Shaking his head, Hannibal forced himself to focus, the success of their first joint creation heavily reliant upon his leave-no-trace knowledge. With Will's intimate experience of crime scenes, the only distinguishing feature of their creation should be the new inspiration and modus operandi – and nothing more. He did a thorough sweep of the environment around the body, happy to see no shoe prints or disruptions at all. Though Will didn't bring an artistic touch to his personal killings, his subtle contributions and interesting insight added to the overall image.

There was a personality shaped in their crime scene – one that despite Hannibal's artistry, he never truly portrayed before. He shaped his message around the artistic design. With Will, a sort of passion came to the forefront. The large gaping holes where Walter Bowerman's eyes once sat were deep and bottomless, and the delicate placement of the heart in the man's hands screamed emotion. In all ways, he gave himself to Will – even in his artistic expression, Hannibal's heart was out, sitting directly on his sleeve.

A sudden warmth appeared against his right side, the all-too familiar scent of Will filling his nostrils without having to purposefully drag in breath. He stood close; his chest practically glued to Hannibal's side. "I never thought I would like showing off – but it's pretty beautiful," Will said softly, a sort of awe in his voice.

Fingers tangled with Hannibal's, the latex gloves between them driving the point home somehow. They were several feet from a fresh showcase, still tangled up in each other. The beauty of the scenario came not just from their exhibition, but the connection that created it. As base as it sounded, a certain type of romance encased the scene. Enjoyment for the craft was shared between them – despite societies view, the hobby acted as the perfect backdrop for intimacy. A certain level of trust had to exist within their partnership; its tangibility personified in the body in front of him.

"The joint effort of two masters," Hannibal replied in agreement, letting his hand rest easily in Will's for a moment. "I will be interested to see what Ms. Lounds makes of it – many will align this with the Chesapeake Ripper."

"It'll be something phantasmagoric with the slightest hint of truth, whatever routes she decides to take. As reluctantly as I am to admit it, she'll see the shift. Jump to the right sort of conclusion. Murders in love, maybe. Or, murder husbands." Will pressed himself more fully against Hannibal's side as he spoke, a reverence existing there for a second. "Soon to be anyway," he continued.

With the smallest chuckle, Hannibal moved to wrap his arm around Will, his lips grazing the side of his head in the process. "Soon to be, indeed." His eyes crinkled with a smile, the mere idea of what was to come making him giddy. The feeling was almost enough to pull him into a cyclical feedback loop – from distracted by Will to thinking deeply about him, there was truly nowhere to run.

The occasion called for a little more finesse, so he forced himself away, his final kiss against Will skin lingering ever so slightly. "I believe we are all finished here. Shall we?" He

gestured back towards the car. All but the last-minute supplies were already back in the discrete storage of the trunk, the lingering of their presence for selfish reasons only.

“Yeah, come on. There’s some celebration that needs to happen, anyway,” Will remarked, his eyebrow raising in a suggestive manner. And it was true – between the post orgasmic fatigue and the busy day they had, only a few glances and the random kiss were given throughout the day. For a newly engaged couple, it simply wasn’t enough.

The walk back to the car was silent, both men in a thoughtful state. Will kept in time with Hannibal, each step matched – their shoulders brushing with every other stride. They were true partners now, no real lines in the sand existing anymore. Hannibal reveled in the feeling of Will Graham in his life, from the other side of the bed to the other mind behind their murderous creations.

Tossing the few supplies and their dirty gloves into a black bag on the back seat, Hannibal got himself settled into the car, driving away the second Will’s door closed behind him. He expertly navigated away from their chosen location, the black top of the road and the lack of incriminating weather keeping their tire tracks from being left behind. By the time they got to the main road, nothing remained but their creation – no sign of either Will or Hannibal in the beautiful mess of it at all.

Will slipped his left hand onto Hannibal’s thigh halfway through the drive; the plain white gold band on his ring finger standing out in all ways. Its weight pressed against Hannibal’s thigh, tantalizing in its feel through the fabric of his pants. Every other second, they passed under the bright light of the highway lights, the strong white of the bulbs giving it a shiny glow. It took a lot of focus to stop his eyes from catching the beam of it each and every time. It was late at night, and the roads were empty, but reckless driving would get them nowhere.

Instead, he let his mind wander to the earlier part of the day. Waking up with a fiancé was life changing. Despite the fact that they spent every day together for the past couple of months, a promise of marriage spoke of commitment. It included an agreement to be together – mind, body, soul, and proximity. Never in his adult life did Hannibal share his space, but he found himself desperately wanting to. Will’s presence brought light to the house; the strength of his spirit alive in every room he walked through. The brownstone he lived in for years finally felt like a home.

Messy black and white dog hair and all.

After a slow wake up of soft kisses and wandering hands, Hannibal impatiently suggested ring shopping – the desire to see a visible mark, one that the rest of the world recognized, it wouldn’t be satisfied until there was a ring on Will’s finger. With a low laugh, Will rubbed their noses together, indulgently relishing in the contact. “You don’t have to convince me. I want to wear your ring, Hannibal. Your mark,” Will whispered, the shoulder Hannibal continuously bit into rising subconsciously.

“Then we will find you the perfect one.” Hannibal’s eyes were alight, his thoughts on fire with so many ideas. It would need to be simple, understated in a way that allowed the delicacy of its statement to make all of the noise. As a chef, it couldn’t be clunky or sensitive to water or surface level scratches. Where so many people stepped into the new age aesthetic

of finer materials, Hannibal knew the classic style suited them better. He already saw it, their matching bands catching in the light of their joint existence.

Will played along with the whole thing rather nicely – where he usually would have fought Hannibal purchasing anything for him, he simply buckled up and went along for the ride, trying on whatever Hannibal picked and giving genuine feedback with every one. His smiles were genuine and when they found the right one, a silent sort of confirmation took place. The second they got the box, Hannibal indulgently slide the ring down onto Will's finger before even leaving the store, triumph radiating from him.

"Forever, then?" Hannibal questioned, bringing Will's hand to his lips to press a series of kisses over the new band. It was already warm from the other's skin – the feel of the metal slightly different now that it graced Will's person.

Long fingers squeezed his own, Will's face torn between overwhelmed and overjoyed. He slipped his bottom lip between his teeth, his head nodding before he could stop himself. "Forever," Will finally said, the tips of his cheeks red. His grip adjusted until Hannibal's fingers were tangled with his own, the next part of the day calling their name.

After their little shopping trip, they made it back to the house with a few hours to spare towards the night's project. The natural rhythm of their existence in each other's sphere moving time along at lightning speed. Without much verbal communication, preparations were completed better than Hannibal usually did on his own.

And as they put their joint symphony together, Will took direction and stepped out on his own when he knew the move was right. Every now and again, their eyes met and the reason they were there hit home again; their connection and its manifestation. There was always a tranquility when he did this, Hannibal falling into the planning and monotony. With Will, it felt out of body, the enjoyment of it twofold.

Riding the high of that feeling the entire way home, Hannibal almost felt surprised when he mechanically pulled into the driveway, his brain so far away. When he parked, Will shot him a knowing look, the hand still in Hannibal's clenching with comfort, then releasing him to climb out of the car. The silent invitation was clear – the option to join Will back in the here and now enticing in the way that the unspoken nature of it amped up the appeal. Hannibal forced himself to take a long breath to check back in, the brief detachment needed, but easily overcome.

He put the needed supply cleanup to the back of his mind and slowly followed Will through the garage door. There was no noise, but as he got further into the house, he noticed a trail of clothes starting just outside the kitchen. Hannibal thumbed uselessly at the buttons of his own shirt, his attention split between what he might find in the bedroom and getting himself out of unnecessary clothes.

His last stride into the room was halted by the image Will made on the bed before him – he was completely naked, the shiny engagement ring the only thing on his entire body. That same left hand was wrapped around his length, his strokes long and slow. The moment of recognition of Hannibal's presence sped up Will's strokes slightly, their eyes locking across the distance between them.

Hannibal kept himself completely still, the length of his cock starting to fill out with each passing second of the view in front of him. It took every ounce of control to stay there, against the door like Will wasn't affecting him to his very center, where arousal spiked so plainly. The man knew exactly what he was doing, the glint in his eye full of mischief as they stared unblinking at each other. Will continued looking at him, even as he brought his hand to his mouth and licked a wet stripe across the length of his palm and fingers. His tongue paying special attention to the shiny metal around his finger – just to tease them both.

"Are you just going to stand there?" Will asked, trailing his hand down the middle of his chest, the tips of his fingers running along his treasure trail before wrapping back around a leaking length. "I understand liking to watch. You in action today – Hannibal, it's an unbelievable sight."

Nostrils flaring, Hannibal nodded his head, words escaping him for the moment. He wasn't prepared to move quite yet, arousal coursing through him in such a tidal wave that succumbing to it too soon would totally ruin him. Everything was hot – his skin and very core burning up from the fire Will ignited within him. To keep himself active, Hannibal started to work on his shirt buttons again, the expensive fabric hitting the floor a moment later.

Taking a couple of steps closer to the bed, Hannibal made quick work of his belt, and then the button and zipper to loosen his pants. He pushed them down, palming himself through the newly revealed boxer briefs. A wet spot was already prominent along the front, Hannibal hard as a rock without a single touch. For the first time since walking in the door, their eyes broke contact, Will taking him in, instead.

The pink of Will's tongue trailed along his bottom lip, the move tantalizing, like a siren's song in the way it drew Hannibal right in. With a simple shift, Hannibal got himself out of his underwear, both men now completely naked, staring each other down. "You are my muse, Will. Standing by your side, it brought out a different side to me."

Now right by the bed, Hannibal didn't have time to react before Will reached out and pulled him, the only way to regain his balance was to just go with it. Hannibal climbed onto the bed and slipped between Will's thighs, their cocks lining up, chests pressing together. Will immediately shifted his grip, wrapping his hand around them both.

A soft groan left Hannibal's chest, the ring on Will's finger a foreign feeling on sensitive skin, the band smooth in a way that balanced out the callouses on Will's hand so beautifully. Unable to stop himself, Hannibal thrust into the tight circle of the other's grip, the sloppy stickiness of Will's precum making the slide against each other so easy.

"You take me to pieces, Will. The sight of you. The feel of you against me. The way you make me better. This is the most out of sorts I have ever felt – and I love it. I love you," Hannibal muttered against the shell of Will's ear, his lips tracing the line there, then down and across his throat. "I cannot wait to spend my life with you."

Abruptly, Will let go of their lengths, the change in pressure pulling Hannibal's hips forward on their own accord. He missed it but liked the wider splay of Will's hips more. His fiancé thrust his hips up, bodily reacting to his words. "Chef Will Lecter does have a good ring to

it," Will mumbled, shifting until he could grip Hannibal's cheeks. "I love you, too, Hannibal. Now – fuck me. I really need to feel you inside."

The request shot another spark of heat straight to Hannibal's groin, his eyes closing against it. He pulled in a deep breath, nosing blindly along Will's cheeks until their lips met, the kiss a soft juxtaposition to the rampage of want and hormones trying to overtake him. The kiss continued as he reached over to the bedside drawer, grabbing the lube with impatience. They fucked enough to skip the intensive prep, but the intimacy of it was too tempting – too hard to pass up.

Breaking the kiss, Hannibal sat up, his heels under him. He gripped Will's hips and hoisted him until they rested on Hannibal's lap. The move spread Will's legs a little wider, his pink hole winking enticingly. Will sighed then, his blue eyes almost entirely overtaken by blown-out pupils. "Yes, Hannibal – fuck," Will babbled, his cock throbbing as more precum coated his belly.

The click of the lube cap was loud in the room, their breathing and a rogue moan the only other sounds taking up the space. Turning the bottle over, Hannibal emptied a good portion of it over the flat of Will's stomach, a drawn out "fuck" leaving Will's mouth at the cold contact. While it warmed on Will's skin, Hannibal used his thumbs to trace from scrotum to hole, the motion pulling Will's pert ass cheeks apart. The tips traced along the pink of Will's rim, the muscle already starting to loosen.

Will smirked up at him, his cheeks pink, "you're such a tease."

Not able to disagree, Hannibal shrugged his shoulders, one of his hands letting Will go in order to run a couple of his fingers through the now skin-warm lube. He spread the slick around Will's rim, the tip of his pointer finger and thumb spreading him. It took a moment, but Will started to relax, both fingers fitting in to the knuckle. Hannibal kept his touch light, merely working the muscle loose. It was as much for his enjoyment as Will's comfort – the way Will's body reacted to him was intoxicating, and worth exploring every chance he encountered.

Will's impatience broke through the haze of his enjoyment a few minutes later, his trim hips shifting until a little more of Hannibal's fingers slipped inside. "Please," he panted, his skin flushed and rosy, the red of it one Hannibal wanted to replicate the next second he got the chance. The verbal plea was enough to take out a limb of Hannibal's control – before he could blink, his first two fingers were steadily pressing into Will's tight heat.

As he thrust forward with his fingers, Hannibal used his free hand to tease up and down Will's thigh, his fingers just barely brushing along his sticky red length. Will let out a solid moan with every sliver of contact, the man below him quickly falling under the sensory spell. So many things were happening – Hannibal was a master at his art and for months now, enjoyed the canvas that was Will. He knew how to take pieces apart and put them back together in the most pleasurable way.

A third finger joined the first two in deep plunges, the relaxed muscle sucking the digits inside with every thrust – the tips of them just barely missing Will's prostate. In enticement, Will clenched around him, the added tightness driving Hannibal out of his head, making it

hard to concentrate on anything else – the warmth was going to feel amazing around his thick length.

All of the sudden at the end of his own rope, Hannibal pulled his fingers out and swiped the remaining lube from Will's stomach to smear along his erection. He used lube covered hands to flip Will over, the idea of seeing the man's face in that moment too much – the desire to cum on the spot was already rampant. Seeing the things he did to the man he loved was intoxicating, enough to pull him over with a simple touch.

Pulling Will up onto his hands and knees, Hannibal used his other hand to guide his cock to Will's rim, the head circling around and around until the muscle gave. He passed through the first ring of it easily, the rest of him sliding in after a flutter and pause – Will's body pulling him in almost subconsciously. Finally joined in that perfect way, Hannibal tossed his head back, moaning loudly. "You feel divine, Will. Better every time." The words were panted, practically grit through clenched teeth.

They seemed to do the trick, though – Will used the leverage of his position to push back against him, the muscled body moving forward and back until he found a delightful rhythm of fucking himself on Hannibal's cock. Simply enjoying, Hannibal gripped his hips; his fingers guaranteed to leave bruises.

The steady rise and fall of their love making increased incrementally. Hannibal let Will set the pace for a while, his body relaxed and receptive to Will's whims. Every now and then, he punctuated a thrust with a swift roll of his hips but stayed relatively passive. When Will's clenching and pulsing started to reach a peak, Hannibal took a grip of things, pulling on Will's shoulder until they were chest to back, the length of his cock even deeper than before. His arm wrapped tightly around Will, Hannibal keeping him close with a squeeze of bicep and core. His other hand fell loosely around Will's cock.

"Rock back when I thrust up," Hannibal prompted, his hips snapping up with a hard thrust. Will nodded, resting his head on Hannibal's shoulder and immediately doing what he was asked – each thrust went deep and when he ground back, Will stimulated his prostate incessantly. Curses and groans fell from his fiancé's mouth, the pitch of Will's voice deepening by the second. Hannibal understood the sentiment, his stomach dangerously tight from impending orgasm.

Tightening his hand around Will's cock, Hannibal went from letting the length merely slip into his grip to ruthlessly stroking him, the pace of his hand matching that of his hips. Desperation took away some of the class of his devotion of Will, but the passion level skyrocketed, their connection pulsing with live energy. When they fed it this way, everything between them evolved; things grew and changed from the power and strength of their shared intimacy.

"I'm close, baby," Will ground out, the unusual pet name tumbling out into the air between them. As pedestrian as it was, Hannibal felt turned on by it – Will expressing his feelings would never cease to do anything but. His own closeness probably contributed to that, but he didn't let himself think – not when the peak was inches away and promising to be one of the best free-falls he ever experienced.

The hand around Will's chest moved up to grip his cheek, his fingers pushing until Will turned and met his mouth in a harsh kiss. Hannibal tightened the grip of his hand still wrapped around Will's purpling erection; his thrusts ruthless. So close himself, Hannibal yanked himself out of the kiss, his voice dropping as he panted "come" wetly against Will's cheek.

Will surprised them both by spilling across Hannibal's hand almost immediately, a harsh shout echoing around the room with every pulse of release. Maroon eyes stayed open long enough to see the first couple before they slammed shut, fighting against the immense rush of his own orgasm overtaking him. Between the clench of Will around him and the tandem beating of their hearts, Hannibal couldn't be surprised by the intensity of it – this finishing line like a whole new level of nirvana.

He held Will through their comedown, his legs shaky from the combined weight. It all became too much – Hannibal just cognizant in his fatigue to direct them to the dry part of the bed when they inevitably fell to their sides onto the mattress. Hannibal kept a hand slung over Will's hip, the touch keeping them close and Hannibal grounded to this reality. He feared he might float away, if not.

Long fingers tangled through his own after a while, Will pulling Hannibal closer with a tug. The move caused his softening cock to slip free, pulling a groan from them both. Overwhelmed from it, Hannibal tucked his face into the curtain of Will's hair, his nostrils flaring. "You are too much," Hannibal whispered, a vulnerability in his voice.

"Mm, I love you, too," Will responded sarcastically, his body adjusting against Hannibal as he spoke.

A few days later, Hannibal sunk down onto the couch in the study, Will already on the cushion next to him. They dined on Walter Bowerman's kidneys in a breakfast for dinner entrée and moved to finish it with a light brandy to compliment the sweetness throughout the dish. Hannibal shooed Will out of the kitchen after they passed the first dish. The brush of their arms and the look Will kept giving him was so blatantly distracting. If he were to actually get the dishes done, Will couldn't be present.

When he entered the room, Will was relaxed against the back of the couch, one of his recipe books open on his lap. Though he made the recipes time and time again, Will liked to look them over and make the latest correction to it, or suggest a new addition for the next time he made it. In the same way that Hannibal obsessed over his patient notes, Will relived his dishes and thought about the collection of flavors for better crafting later. Hannibal entering the room broke his concentration, a soft smile overtaking his look of focus from just seconds earlier.

Will wrapped his arm around Hannibal's shoulder as he leaned back, pulling him close. Soft lips were against his cheek, the smell of sweet maple syrup style cloying on his breath. "Anything new from Freddie?" Will asked, leaning into Hannibal's space like he too owned it. His free hand tapped on the screen of Hannibal's iPad, a teasing sort of look on his face.

Hannibal leaned into the touch, punching in his passcode on the screen as he did. Tattle Crime was proudly displayed when it lit up, a full landscape shot of their crime scene from days previous. A proud feeling sat in his chest; the result of their pairing was even more exciting than he remembered. He kept the picture there for a while, reliving the scene with Will in the comfort of their home.

Blinking at that thought, Hannibal remembered his earlier contemplation of shared space. Since getting engaged, Will seemed to fit into the house more with every day that past. First, a closet full of clothes that weren't there before. Then a stack of books and glasses on Will's side of the bed. Will's chef knives, which were usually kept wrapped up in their cases, found a home in a drawer Hannibal cleared for them – the sharpness and professional quality of them even more beautiful now that they took up joint space. It was natural and in reality, happening on its own for much longer than either of them realized.

With the arm around Hannibal's shoulder, Will touched his cheek, bringing his thoughts back to their proximity. Their mouths met for a short kiss, the simple press of lip against lip more for reassurance and need to touch than anything else. Blue eyes were vivid when Will pulled back, the smile not on his lips evident in the depths of them. "At least she managed to get a good shot of it. Should we frame it? Or keep it in a scrapbook?"

A chuckle fell from Hannibal's lips, Will's ability to be obscene and intimate in moments truly astounding – heartwarming, if he allowed himself to feel those sappy feelings. Hannibal leaned forward to kiss him again, their noses brushing as he drew away. "You should move in, then – we can turn one of the rooms upstairs into a joint office and find a discrete way to highlight our work."

There was a second of silence, then a hearty laugh that brought goosebumps to the surface of Hannibal's skin. It sounded happy, radiant in a way that if out in public, would have all eyes on him. A warmth overtook them then, Will's empathy outwardly projecting to wrap them both in the shadow of his feelings. The noise brought Winston into the room, the sharp click of nails on hard floor evidence enough. He was probably looking at them intently, his doggy head tilting to the side in a silent question.

Ignoring everything but Will, Hannibal shifted slightly, wrapping his arms around Will's middle. "This is our home, Will. Let's make it official," Hannibal continued, presenting unneeded evidence to an already convinced jury. Will was beaming at him, desperately clinging to him now that their bodies were closer.

"I've been slowly moving in right under your nose, so I'm glad you're finally on board," Will replied, another round of laughter falling from rosy, kiss-red lips. "Instead of an office, though – I think we should upgrade the basement."

For the rest of the night, they went back and forth about the little details – should Will sell his place over in Wolf Trapp (not yet), and a multitude of renovation ideas (more space in their kitchen and a full-service butchery fridge in place of his smaller deep freeze). Like everything else between them, things fell into place with a few compromises on both their parts. The one place Will wouldn't move was the kitchen, the need for elbow room one that wouldn't go away anytime soon – not when almost every free moment of time they had was spent there. And would continue to be so as the years past.

After all the conversation took place, Hannibal worked to put everything in motion. They cleaned out Will's house with a thorough efficiency. Most of Will's clothes and personal items he wasn't willing to part with were already at Hannibal's, the furniture and cooking supplies (except the butcher block) finding places in their house or new homes with resellers or collectors. All of his fishing equipment made it into a room that Hannibal cleared out and set up for perfect storage and fly tying. Fishing pole racks were on the walls and an old antique desk sat by the window already decked out with his tying equipment by the time Will came home from work at the end of the week.

The renovation part of their adventure took a little more finesse. Since they both worked throughout the day, and Hannibal refused to give anyone free reign of his home, most of the work took place in the evening, when they normally cooked together and enjoyed the last few hours of the day in a peaceful sort of silence. For three weeks, Will brought home dinner from his jobs and they dealt with the never-ending clacking of workers working. When they were done, the new space was beautiful and overwhelmingly worth the discomfort of space invasion.

Will, in his never-ending toolbox of skills, worked on the changes in the basement himself. Since there was already a heating/cooling system and water hook ups, increasing the space wasn't much of an issue. Though Hannibal wasn't entirely handy, he helped where he could (mainly looking manly and holding things in place while Will actually worked).

It took almost three months to officially get Will moved in, renovations and all. There were a few trials and tribulations between them; both men were particular and liked things their own way. Alphas in that respect. When the tension ran hot, Will sighed with mirth and exasperation and left the house with Winston, walking for hours or until the madness ran its course. He came back in the door to find Hannibal waiting for him, each and every time. They shared a look, then talked about the problem like grown-ups (even if the initial issue wasn't all that grown up to begin with).

The transition from being a singular entity to a completely conjoined one took work – effort that seemed to be worth it with every passing day; no matter how crazy Will drove him in the moment. Two strong personalities took up a lot of space, and though they stayed together for months before now, the room sharing and existence duality was permanent; the way they navigated being together this way set the foundation for the rest of their lives.

Every time Hannibal thought about it, Will being his forever, he found himself so distracted, so overtaken, that focus was increasingly difficult. Many of his patients were boring, there wasn't any denying that. He mastered the ability to barely listen and retreat while seemingly engaged and present. Hannibal spent dull sessions in his mind palace, planning and remembering, keeping himself completely occupied, despite the boredom of his reality.

Almost every day, Hannibal managed to keep up the façade. Unless the patient was Franklyn Froideveaux – not only was the man incredibly boring and textbook neurotic, his unhealthy obsession with Hannibal got out of control the more they met. Where Will knowing everything about him was charming, Franklyn and his incessant need to pry and be where he was made him angry – progressively murderous as time went on.

A nose being blown snapped him from the room he shared with Will in his mind palace, the seat Franklyn sat in occupied with his gorgeous fiancé, instead. Blinking the vision away, Hannibal tilted his head, feigning interest.

“Are you bored with me?” Franklyn questioned when their eyes met, his rubbed red nostrils repulsive in their rawness.

“No at all. This hour is not about me, Franklyn. I am simply here to listen and direct,” Hannibal said, attempting to redirect his patient’s attention on the real reason they were there – his therapy. A petulant huff told him he wasn’t successful – Franklyn looked moody and seconds away from rebutting whatever came out of Hannibal’s mouth. Thankfully, the alarm on his watch went off, the vibration of it a happy coincidence. Any longer and Franklyn’s desperation to “know” Hannibal would present itself front and center.

“We will start with this during our next session, Franklyn. It seems as if your hour is up.” Hannibal stood up as he spoke, straightening his waistcoat and swiftly buttoning his suit jacket. He took small steps towards the door, trying to herd the man out without outwardly kicking him through the door. Will was set to arrive at any minute and Franklyn’s presence was the last thing he wanted when his fiancé arrived.

Of course, Franklyn dawdled, attempting to make small talk as he collected his used tissues and jacket, the former going into the pockets of the latter after he shrugged it on. His eyes were wide and glassy, still a little red from his earlier crying spell. He lingered in the doorway, Franklyn trying desperately to get anything at all from Hannibal – his attempts both transparent and pathetic.

And as luck would have it, the back entrance to his building opened and the most beautiful human walked through it. Will’s chef whites were open over one of Hannibal’s plain white t-shirts, a lot of his comfy clothes overtaken by Will now that they shared drawer space. His hair was slightly slicked back from his forehead, the dab of gel and sweat from cooking keeping kinky curls from falling into his face. Until he laid eyes on Franklyn, his cheeks were pulled upright into a smile, the glint of finally coming home evident in the blush on his cheeks and the clarity of his eyes. There was a flash of aggression, then a firm masked pulled down over his face.

Will’s transition, no matter how much he saw it, never ceased to amaze him.

“Hey you,” Will greeted sweetly. He narrowed the space down between them to cup Hannibal’s cheek. With the leverage of his hand, Will pulled him into a deep kiss, their tongues meeting briefly, even. There was a shared moment of silent communication when they pulled away, a mischievous smirk overtaking Will’s face.

“Who’s this, then?” Franklyn asked, his voice too haughty for his position between them. He looked offended and downtrodden, the frown on his face readable, portraying his frustration with the situation without much attempt at hiding it.

Hannibal turned to pull Will against his side, the need to touch him driving Hannibal to press his lips against the side of his head. He pulled in a long breath, the scent calming – Will with an undertone of paprika and cumin, the makings of a good jambalaya present on the surface

of his skin. Maroon eyes slipped shut, taking in the comfort of Will – using it for strength for the upcoming conversation.

“Not that it is any of your business, but this is my fiancé, Will Graham,” Hannibal finally replied, his fingers digging into Will’s side. His other half understood the awkwardness of the situation, Will’s body pressing more firmly against him in response. He forced the smile that threatened to spill across his cheeks down, the line of his mouth neutral, despite the warm feeling of Will next to him.

“You’re engaged?” Franklyn immediately bit back, his thick brows pulling together in afront.

Before Hannibal could respond, Will chimed in, the calm cadence of his voice making the words cutting and aggressive – a warning in and of itself. “Happily so.”

There was a moment of room encompassing silence, Will and Franklyn eyeing each other until the shorter man could no longer keep up. Franklyn lifted his hand to his throat, a couple of fingers slipping under his tie to loosen it. Unease was palpable in the air – Will looked at him unblinkingly, the stare unbroken and menacing in its intensity. There was a message being sent, one that, after a battle of wills, finally seemed to be driven home.

With a couple of stuttered attempts at saying something else, Franklyn blinked the try away and stumbled from the room. He didn’t look back over his shoulder and when the door shut with a click, the warm feeling of victory shrouded the room. Hannibal, both pleased and excited by the interaction, turned Will to him, his hands moving until they were chest to chest, their lips meeting easily. “I love you,” Hannibal whispered happily, shutting his eyes against the affection.

“I can’t kill him, though, can I?” Will asked without waiting a beat, grinning from ear to ear. The best part of the question, probably for the both of them, was the true want of it. If given the opportunity, Will would strike the shorter man down, proclaiming his dominance in the basest of ways. The man who even attempted to claim even a small part of Hannibal didn’t deserve to walk the streets at all, that much was obvious.

Cupping Will’s cheek, Hannibal rested their foreheads together, his chuckle ghosting across the surface of both their skin. “I will never tell you no, my love. Is it the smartest idea? No, of course not. He is a patient that I actively see. It would put us in unnecessary danger – but I will never collar your spirit.”

Those words were enough – Hannibal baring his soul and giving his utmost acceptance to Will meant more than a moment of fleeting aggression; Hannibal didn’t need to be an empath to feel the shift in mood. Will nodded his head, the vivid blue of his eyes hidden behind accepting eyelids that slid closed in concession.

“I’ll just have to be more obnoxious with my PDA, instead.”

After that day, the interaction sat fresh in his mind – Will’s reaction to it specifically. Between them, Hannibal showed more outward emotion where others were concerned. Many people were fond of Will’s looks, and when given the chance to speak with him, the man’s brain and personality, too. An overwhelming amount of jealousy resided right under the

surface of his skin and threatened to overtake Hannibal if he ever let the weakness take hold. Will kept calm under the surface, his ability to read and empathize with others making it easier. Yet, the second he caught wind of Franklyn, his hackles raised and the need to protect his territory took over.

It felt good – to be so cherished that Will would kill for him. Would, after all was said and done, put himself on someone's radar to enact a little possessive claiming. And the mere fact that Will took him at his word – that a sort of trust existed between them that his advice played a big part in Will's decision – it meant everything.

Which is why, two weeks later, Hannibal was surprised to find the head of the FBI's BAU at his patient exit door. He diverted the man to his waiting room and took an extra minute to collect himself. His brain wanted to jump to conclusions, to immediately start to make a plan to protect himself – yet, the trust he had in Will kept him from acting at all. Instead, he ran a hand over his hair, checked his suit, and opened the door with as little fanfare as possible.

"Mr. Crawford, please come in," Hannibal said simply, taking a step back to allow the special agent to enter his office. Jack Crawford, who graced his office no less than two years ago, made himself at home – his scarf and jacket finding Hannibal's hand before he could ask to take them. Hanging them up, Hannibal gestured towards the chair in front of the desk – a question in his eye. "What can I do for you today? I have not heard from you for a consultation in some time."

Jack took the offered seat and relaxed back into it. His face was impassive, the thickness of his eyebrows making eye expressions hard to read. Remembering from their brief time together beforehand, Hannibal appreciated the wall the man presented – he kept the dominant part of himself under the surface until it was needed. Around Hannibal, it didn't usually show its face.

"One of your patients, a Franklyn Froideveaux, was reported missing by a friend. When we went to investigate your name came up. It seems as if Mr. Froideveaux might have been slightly obsessed with you. And your significant other – a Mr. Will Graham. If Mr. Budge is to be believed, you two were a main source of conversation for him."

Subtly trying to suck in a breath, Hannibal kept his eyes up, the only expression of his nervousness the run of his fingers over the charcoal pencil sitting on his desk. The worst of his suspicions about Franklyn were confirmed. He worried, that despite his agreeance, Will went behind his back after all. There wasn't enough time to wrack his memory of the last couple of weeks. With a quick blink, Hannibal focused in the moment again.

"That is disturbing news. I did notice that he seemed to be focused more on me than his actual therapy, but I was not aware of the extent. We see each other bi-weekly, so he has not passed across my door since our last appointment on the 3rd," Hannibal answered calmly, his skin crawling with nervousness. It felt odd – to be so far removed from a situation.

"So, you haven't seen him in almost two weeks, then? You didn't notice him following you around, or anything like that?" Jack fired his questions rapidly, his no nonsense attitude so very on point.

“I have not. We meet every two weeks on Thursday evening, 6PM. Aside from the intensive amount of attention he paid to me during our sessions, I did not notice anything out of the ordinary. He met my fiancé after his last session briefly, but that was their only interaction.”

“Well, things ran a little deeper than that, Doctor Lecter. We found zoomed in pictures of you and your fiancé in several different locations. Will’s a private chef, right? There were photos of him coming out of several of his clients’ homes.” Jack paused for a second, his entire body going still. “I think you were being stalked.”

Extremely taken aback, Hannibal sunk back into his chair. Aside from the fact that they might be in danger, Hannibal missing something like that was out of character. Will was the only person that willingly got to have a step up on him – his pride and reputation couldn’t deal with anything else. If Franklyn was really missing, Hannibal swore to find him just to issue death to him by his own hands. From what he knew about his patient, this sort of manipulation just didn’t seem right – there had to be more.

“And this Mr. Budge – he just turned over all of this information to you? From what Franklyn told me throughout our sessions, his friend was not all that receptive to Franklyn’s efforts.” Hannibal’s brain was already running away with the information, replaying all the instances in which Tobias Budge was mentioned. Though often, it was always in complaint of a lack of interest, never anything positive that would point to a level of intimacy that the knowledge given to Jack displayed.

“We were wondering that, too. I have someone looking into him and their relationship. It doesn’t seem like Franklyn had a lot of family, so the leads don’t stretch very far. Is there anything else you might know? Anything helpful?” Jack was sitting forward in his chair, his ears back like Winston when he navigated the kitchen while Hannibal and Will were in it.

Wanting nothing more than to have Jack Crawford out of his office and Will on the phone, Hannibal shook his head confidently. “No, but I still have your number if anything changes. I will let you know whether Franklyn attends his appointment tomorrow afternoon.” Hannibal stood from his chair with the last few words, attempting to herd Jack Crawford out of his office like he did any unruly patient. The man seemed to take the hint and got up.

He made quick work of his jacket and scarf, a thick hand landing between them. Hannibal took it swiftly, a thorough handshake following. “Please let me know if anything changes. I appreciate your help, Doctor Lecter.” They caught eyes and shared a heavy glance before Jack turned away and left through the same door he came.

As the seconds past, Hannibal felt anxiety crawl all over him, his neck and shoulders tense from the weight of it settling in his chest. His mind was racing, trying to piece together all of the assorted parts to the mystery, while trying to keep calm and make the necessary calls to ensure both his and Will’s safety. Just barely together, Hannibal forced his body to move away from the door and towards his desk where his phone sat. Pressing his thumb down, Hannibal immediately noticed the missed call and voicemail notifications. Two were from Will and two from a completely unknown number.

Heart racing with anticipation, Hannibal listened to Will’s message first – the brightness of his voice almost immediately bringing his anxiety down. The delicacy of Will’s influence

over him felt big now, bold in a way that could hold him close – cradle him in the comfort of the man's presence with a few words and the right tone.

"Hey, Hannibal," the message started, Will's voice high and flirty, specifically for him. "The Wilson's took a last-minute vacation, so I'm done early for the day. I thought to take the bike for a ride, but it needs an oil change. I'm going to head out to Wolf Trapp to use the space in the shed while I still have it. If you listen to this before 5, come out and join me. I might like to dirty you up a little." There was a pause and a muttered word that sounded like Winston's name before Will spoke again, ending the message. "I love you, Hannibal. See you tonight."

If it weren't for the other message waiting for him, Hannibal would've called him back immediately, the desperation to know his status harder to overcome now that he heard Will's voice. Shaking his head at his absurdity, Hannibal forced himself to get it together. With all the details finally starting to come together, the smell of a trap became more prominent. Alerting their attacker of his presence was the worst thing he could do.

He saved Will's message like all the others, before thumbing to the next message waiting for him. The number sported a Baltimore area code and felt all the more threatening because of it. Franklyn's number was on file and after a quick run through of his records, Hannibal figured it was not his. Whoever it was had a step up on him already – access to his personal information.

Hannibal finally let the message play, his fingers tense around the phone as he held it up to his ear. A foreign voice crackled over the line – the pitch of it base, the man's tone neutral and lacking.

"It is a 65-mile drive from Baltimore to Wolf Trapp, Doctor Lecter. How fast can you make it?"

The message was only twenty seconds, a simple question that obviously had an equally simple answer. Yet, he felt stuck in place, Hannibal playing the voicemail three more times before he felt able to move or breathe or even think. Without a doubt, Will was in danger. There were ten minutes between Will's message and the anonymous one. Just enough time for Will to settle into what for so long was HIS space. Though he didn't do it often, Will let his guard down in the shed, much like he did while in the kitchen. Anything could happen – especially when an intelligent psychopath was involved. Hannibal knew first-hand.

Realizing how vulnerable they both were apart from one another, Hannibal fled from the room, barely remembering to lock the door behind himself. When he let it, the Bentley tore up the miles – its efficient engine providing both good gas mileage and versatility. In all his years of trying to live inconspicuously, Hannibal didn't dare use the car's ability. It felt good, when he pressed the gas to the floor and let the car drive – he wasn't sure what awaited him, but the need to let go and let instinct take over was paramount. If a fight awaited him, Hannibal needed to be ready.

What usually took almost an hour ended up under forty minutes – Hannibal pulled into the driveway recklessly, glancing at the clock as he did. Scanning ahead of him, Hannibal noticed Will's truck and a strange black Sedan. Tobias Budge's car, probably. He pulled in directly behind the truck, the length of the car hiding his approach for at least a few seconds.

Hannibal sucked in a deep breath, slipped a scalpel under the cuff of his right wrist, and pocketed his cell phone. In terms of battle equipment, it wasn't much – but enough to at least give him an opportunity to defend or attack.

Upon approach, Hannibal noticed that the front door was open, the sharp wind from outside funneling in through the door with a sharp hiss. It was probably freezing inside – they turned off the entire heating unit the last time they were here to keep Will's bill low. The day was damp and cold, blustery from the front moving in. Frostbite and hypothermia could be an integral part of the plan.

Shouldering his way through the door, Hannibal quickly looked around the room, shuddering with anxious relief when he laid eyes on Will. He was seated with his arms tied behind his back, a large strip of duct tape over his mouth. The tip of his nose was red, and he seemed to be shivering within his bindings. Yet, when their eyes met, a knowing look flashed across murderous blue eyes. Will gestured with his head for Hannibal to come towards him – the coast obviously clear for now.

Hannibal pulled the tape from Will's face first, the loud rip of it made his stomach churn – Will's yell of displeasure one he didn't want to ever hear again. He moved without thinking, both hands cupping Will's cheeks with reverence. "My Will," Hannibal whispered, thumbs brushing over his fiancé's cold and pale skin.

"Thank fuck you're here," Will said, teeth chattering. He leaned into Hannibal's touch for a second, then shifted a little, his eyes looking sharply behind them. "One of my hunting knives is tucked into the side of my left boot. I'll be better help with my hands untied." Though he was tied up and so cold to the touch, Will remained sassy, his smirk firmly in place.

With a couple of coordinated moves, Hannibal got Will's knife and freed him with expert cutting motions across the thin rope. Before dropping it to the ground, he noticed how close the knots were to be untied, the tips of Will's fingers raw and red, scratched up by the ropes surface. His boy was so strong, smart and discrete in his attempts to release himself in Hannibal's absence. Hannibal never wanted to be in this position again but found a small bit of comfort in Will's greatness – the new additions to its silhouette in Hannibal's mind surprising and delightful all the same. Shaking his head of the thought, he grabbed both of Will's hands when they were free, rubbing over the previously immobile limbs to start the blood pumping again.

"What are we up against?" Hannibal questioned, helping Will out of the chair and onto his feet. He handed the knife back to Will without thought, wanting them both equipped before anything else. Will gripped it tightly, clenching his jaw as his legs gave out slightly, his free arm wrapping around Hannibal's middle for balance. They stood still for a moment, both of Hannibal's arms keeping Will close, the man absorbing the comfort of his presence and delightful heat from his body. Chattering lips pressed lightly against Hannibal's neck, caressing the skin there. He nuzzled into Hannibal as much as he could, speaking moments later.

"There's just one guy, Tobias or something. He used Franklyn as a distraction. I knew something was up when I left the house – the back door was cracked open and Winston was nosing at it. I didn't have a chance to figure out what it was until Franklyn was at the door of

the shed, looking frightened and completely out of it. The second I got the door open, Budge came up behind him and snapped his neck; got a step up on me from the surprise of it all." Will reached behind his head, rubbing gently. "He pushed me back and I tripped over my own foot, smacked my head on the front of my worktable."

Growing angrier by the second, Hannibal replaced Will's hand with his own, his fingers palpating his skull critically. There was a surface wound that probably needed stitches, and a large bump that was tender to the touch – Will moved away from the pressure more than once in his exploration. "Are you concussed?" Hannibal asked, flattening his hand to pull Will closer to him.

"Yes. But I can handle my own. Now that I know what I'm up against, I've got him."

"We will get him," Hannibal corrected instantly, unwilling to think about Will without him ever again. "You were obviously a lure to get me here. Now that I have arrived, he will reveal his next move soon." A certain prickle across his skin told him of the rightness of his thoughts, the nerve endings there lit up like someone was watching him.

What felt like a second later, that someone made himself known. Though they never met before, Hannibal instantly knew the man across the floor was Tobias Budge. His sharp dress reminded him of a few of Franklyn's outfits – the replication of this man's look extremely clear now. He held Hannibal's eye, the man's calm façade never fleeting, despite the rage Hannibal knew every ounce of his body portrayed.

"Nice of you to join us, Doctor Lecter. I knew keeping Will here would bring you out of the woodwork. You two make quite the couple, I must say. Rather precious in your commitment to each other." Tobias's nostrils flared, the tone of his voice juxtaposing the pinch to his brow. "Neither of you know me, but I know all about you."

"It seems that you have quite the leg up then," Hannibal replied smoothly, using Will's body in front of him to pull the scalpel from his sleeve, the slimness of the knife allowing it to sit unseen in his hand. "What can we do for you, Mr. Budge – you went through quite a lot of trouble to get us all here."

"Jack Crawford got to you already, then," Tobias responded, ignoring the question all together. He took a couple of steps forward, looking quietly between Hannibal and Will. "The evidence against Franklyn was circumstantial at best. But – that is not of importance now."

"What's important now?" Will remarked, stepping forward so that he was firmly between Tobias and Hannibal, the hunting knife now tucked safely into the waistband of his pants. The little routine built up of small movements and slights of hand was impressive, their dance perfecting itself as the scene played on. "What do you want?"

"At first, I wanted to know what made Franklyn so obsessed with his weirdly dressed psychiatrist. He's attracted to the outliers of society – one crazy looking for those exactly like him. I spent so much time alone, I thought someone else like me in my life was exactly what I needed. Especially after I followed you, Doctor Lecter, to a faraway place where you enacted a craft similar to mine – and did it so marvelously well. I wanted to be your friend." Tobias looked sharply at Will then, his eyes narrowing.

“Before I could find my way in, you came into the picture. Will Graham, private chef, dog owner, Hannibal Lecter’s lover. I thought to dispose of you right away but couldn’t – not after I saw the attachment. I realized, that no matter how much I wanted you all for my own,” Tobias said, eyes drifting to Hannibal, “that would never be. The choice to kill you both was easy after that.” With his last words, Tobias let a chorded cello string fall from his hands.

Things went very quickly from there.

Tobias narrowed the distance down to nothing without another word – his arm striking out to bring the string down dangerously. Hannibal reached forward and pulled Will back, the slice of the string in the air just narrowly missing Will’s arm. With the reach of the string, they needed to get the weapon from Tobias before any chance of attack could occur. Will seemed to read his mind; he circled Tobias as much as he could, the move putting their enemy directly between them.

Will, and the recklessness that overtook him, stepped forward when Tobias struck again, allowing the string to wrap around his left wrist. He used the swing of momentum to yank Tobias towards him before the string started to cut into his skin. Hannibal saw the blood through the cut-up flannel, the darkness of it sparking him into action.

Using Tobias’s distraction, Hannibal lunged forward, wrapping his arms around the man’s middle. Immobilized in both their grip, Tobias tried to struggle, yanking on the cello string still in his hand – a long shout of pain from Will’s lips following the action. The sound of his mate in distress brought a shade of red down over his eyes – Hannibal’s aggression shifting to a whole other level. He squeezed hard, yanking back enough for Tobias to lower his hands, dropping his grip on the cello string in the process. With both hands free, Will delivered one, two, three blows across Tobias’s face, his body going noticeably slack in Hannibal’s arms.

“We need to make it look like an accident brought on by self-defense,” Will said, punching Tobias one more time across the cheek for good measure. After being tied up for hours, stretching his arms and getting some redemption probably felt amazing for Will (and looked that way, too).

Hannibal kept his grip tight while he looked around, smirking when he noticed Will’s butcher block sitting prominently in the middle of the kitchen. They were trying to sell it for its worth and hadn’t gotten rid of it yet. He nodded towards it, an idea blooming. “One hit to the temple on the edge of that?”

An enchanted grin washed over Will’s face, a smile highlighting the look. “I love you.” His eyes were shining, like they were in a scene of a romance movie instead of planning the end to a man’s life. The genuine nature of his love was evident, heavy in the chaotic air. Though he didn’t say anything further, contentment exuded from him.

With Will’s added strength, carrying Tobias over to the long table was easy and the deed, when done, was so anti-climactic, it almost didn’t fit the situation.

Carelessly dropping Tobias to the floor, Hannibal stepped around the blood so he could properly pull Will into his arms. How shaken up Will was showed itself in the return touch, his long arms clung to him with the slightest hint of desperation. Taking a life, fighting for his

own – Hannibal couldn't fault him for being scared and wired to the very core. "Thank you for coming." Will muttered into Hannibal's chest, burying his face there in exhausted defeat.

"I will always come for you, Will," Hannibal responded, gripping the trembling body to him a little tighter. "I'm happy you are safe. That I made it in time."

They were quiet for a few minutes after that, both men simply absorbing the other, taking in the proximity and realness of the other person. When all was said and done, they took down their predator enemy without much effort. Yet, their blindness revealed a weakness that their safety depended on. As a pair, they were only untouchable when they were smart. The overwhelming feeling of being better made them a little stupid – the risk nowhere close to worth the reward.

If Tobias did one thing, it reaffirmed their partnership in every way; the greatness and downfalls of it one fell swoop. With hope for the future, Hannibal understood the need to be smart and stay a step ahead. There was no other option – being with Will forever was the only thing Hannibal wanted from the rest of his life. Continuing to do that meant everything.

With a decision made, Hannibal dug into his pocket and pulled out his phone. He fumbled one handed to get the number dialed and waited anxiously while it rang. Hannibal pulled in a long breath when the click of connection sounded over the line, his heart racing. After a gruff greeting, Hannibal clenched Will close, adding a bit of panic to his voice.

"Jack, we need your help."

End Notes

Thanks for sticking around, friends!

I think we've got one more part after this one. Will's POV to finish it up only seems right. Let me know what you think about the latest installment - it's fun to read about what you guys like best.

If you're over on tumblr, come join me (whispersthroughthechrysalis)!

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!